

#	GTAC Recommendations	GSA Response
1	Lodging Per Diem	
a	GSA should preserve/affirm current lodging per diem calculation methodology.	GSA agrees that the current methodology for per diem lodging is accurate, effective, and efficient for the purposes of setting the maximum amount Federal employees may spend on lodging when on travel. GSA agrees to continue following the methodology.
	GSA should shift the calendar year period used for gathering market rate lodging data to May-April (as opposed to April-March).	GSA believes this recommendation is ultimately not in the best interest of those parties who frequently use Federal lodging per diem rates. Federal agencies and employees, and even individuals in the hotel industry, have previously requested GSA post the rates earlier than the typical end of August timeframe. The current timeframe of posting the rates so close to the start of the fiscal year already slows the planning process for both agencies and industry. Moving the process of analysis, review, and approvals forward one month will make the effort to post the next fiscal year's per diem rates in a more timely manner extremely difficult or impossible.
	GSA should perform an annual review of standard Continental United States (CONUS) lodging per diem rate, as opposed to the current three-year review cycle.	GSA agrees to review the standard CONUS lodging per diem rate annually. GSA believes a more frequent review is in line with the law's intent of setting a fair reimbursement rate for federal travelers. Previously, the amount of data needed to set the rate that applies to such a large portion of the country was costly, cumbersome and time-consuming to collect, so the program only undertook the analysis every three years. Now that the process of setting lodging rates is far more automated than in the past, there is no reason not to conduct the standard review annually, as GSA already does for the approximately 360 non-standard
2	Conferences	
3	Recommend that GSA replace the current Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) conference definition with the following: A “conference” refers to a meeting, event, congress, convention, seminar, symposium, or other formal gathering, where attendees of agencies and/or nongovernmental participants explore and exchange information and views on a defined subject, problem, or area of knowledge (e.g., sciences, economics, technology, management), with a published agenda, scheduled speakers or discussion panels. A conference may be internal, hosted by one or more government agencies, or sponsored, in which case registration/conference fees typically apply. The term “conference” also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404.  In addition to replacing the conference definition, the Committee recommends including specific internal controls on conferences, per definitions listed in the report as a " <i>Hosted Conference</i> " or " <i>Sponsored Conference</i> ".	<p>The FTR defines a conference in FTR § 300.3-1 as: a) meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term 'conference' also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404." The basis of the FTR definition comes from OMB Bulletin 93-11, "<i>Fiscal Responsibility and Reducing Perquisites</i>" which defines a conference as: "meetings, retreats, training activities, and other gatherings which involve travel outside the attendees' permanent duty station."</p> <p>While the recommended definition adds more examples with additional language, GSA does not believe it adds substantive language which warrants a change.</p> <p>To address the recommendations of the GTAC on reviews and internal controls of Conferences, GSA does not have authority to implement such actions via the FTR.</p>
	M&IE Per Diem	
	Recommend that GSA examine three restaurant category combination changes to determine the most effective meal per diem methodology:  1) Add fast-casual restaurant category which provides more weighting to actual dining patterns for travelers. 2) Remove AAA-rated three-diamond restaurants which removes more expensive restaurants. 3) Add fast/casual category and remove AAA-rated three-diamond restaurants (combines the two options above).	GSA agrees to conduct a pilot study testing the effects of the three variables proposed by the GTAC. If GSA finds the results of any of the tests will continue to reimburse employees fairly, the adjusted methodology will be used for the Fiscal Year 2016 meals and incidental expense (M&IE) rates.
b	Recommend that the frequency for rate adjustments pertaining to per diem meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) be established as “not to exceed every three years as opposed to every five years.”	GSA agrees the analysis to study and potentially adjust the M&IE per diem rates should be conducted every three years as proposed.
	Recommend that the definition for incidental expenses (IE) when performing official travel be expanded to include the following expense categories: ATM fees and Laundry/dry cleaning.	<p>GSA agrees to expand the incidental expense (IE) definition to include ATM fees. Once the Federal Travel Regulation is updated, itemized ATM fees may no longer be claimed without explicit authorization from the agency.</p> <p>GSA does not agree the allowance of laundry should be included in the IE category. The data is inconclusive that all employees would be fairly reimbursed if this change was made.</p> <p>GSA agrees to re-review the sections in the FTR associated with laundry reimbursement to both ensure fair reimbursement and continue to work toward the goal of efficient administrative management.</p>
4	POV and Rental Cars	
5	Recommend that GSA provide more specific guidance on when to use Privately Owned Vehicles (POV) or rental cars that will save agencies money when authorizing employees to travel.	<p>GSA agrees that employees should rent the least expensive compact car, with minor exceptions for employees with medical issues and for agencies to complete unique missions.</p> <p>GSA recently updated the FTR to require a cost comparison of using a POV, rental cars, or common carriers (airplane, train).</p>
	Lodging Sustainability	

	<p>The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The Department of Energy (DOE) and The General Services Administration should consider adopting the hotel industry and AH&amp;LA-endorsed Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative (HCMI). HCMI provides a carbon metric per room night and carbon footprint for meeting space methodology to calculate baseline and future hotel stay footprint.</p>	<p>The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) coordinates Federal environmental efforts and works closely with agencies and other White House offices in the development of environmental policies and initiatives. CEQ was established within the Executive Office of the President by Congress as part of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and additional responsibilities were provided by the Environmental Quality Improvement Act of 1970. GSA agrees to provide the CEQ with this recommendation and assist in a supporting role within the priorities of the CEQ. GSA supports sustainability and agrees to continue working with EPA on such efforts.</p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Promote Extended Stay Lodging Options</b>	
	<p>Recommend GSA adopt internal message activation in the Electronic Travel System (ETS) requiring federal travelers on extended stay of 30 days or more to review corporate lodging (Schedule 48, 653-9) and extended-stay contracts and extended-stay specific hotel options. These contracts are available through the GSA Schedule and FedRooms, and are in support of efficient travel spend.</p> <p>Federal agencies should examine a policy of reimbursement for less than full per diem, based on potential savings resulting from reduced hotel rates for stays of more than 30 nights.</p>	<p>GSA agrees to review and update the ETS to create a message that advises Federal travelers who will be on travel 30 days or longer to review corporate lodging options on the GSA Schedule and to review opportunities of available extended-stay hotels.</p> <p>GSA agrees, encourages, and supports agencies review their internal policy on long term stay, using the flexibilities and requirements currently in the FTR for reduction of per diem rates based upon length of stay.</p>
<b>7</b>	<b>Travel Risk Management (Duty of Care) Program</b>	
	<p>GSA should assess current travel risk management (duty of care) programs within the federal government and apply a minimum standard for all agencies follow.</p>	<p>GSA agrees to add the term "Duty of Care" to the FTR and identify where agencies must have minimum standards of Duty of Care. Additionally, ETS reports will be reviewed to identify the terminology as well as additional reports will be identified as agencies request for duty of care programs.</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>Enterprise Level Travel Data</b>	
	<p>All federal agencies should compile and maintain enterprise-level travel data sufficient to support business decisions, respond to government-wide data calls, leverage sourcing strategies, and comply with the Government Performance and Results Act (P.L. 103-62).</p>	<p>GSA agrees to lead a formal working group under the guidance of the Senior Travel Official Council, with the charge of developing short-term guidelines for the use of agency-level travel management, as well as developing a long-term strategy map for government-wide travel data. The group will also look into the use of a data system for travel policy, procurement, and programs, all driving toward more efficient travel by Federal employees.</p>
<b>9</b>	<b>Designation of Agency Senior Travel Officials</b>	
	<p>Federal agencies and/or agency components, in conjunction with their Office of Inspector General, designate a senior travel official to set policies and controls to ensure efficient travel and conference spending.</p>	<p>GSA agrees to establish and charter a governance council, called the Senior Travel Official Council, whose membership is made up of agency-designated senior officials with accountability for travel leadership, including fiscal responsibility. The council will have representation, at a minimum, of the 24 CFO Act agencies.</p>
<b>10</b>	<b>Train travel approving officials across the board</b>	
	<p>Establish a mandate to require each agency to provide training to all Travel Approving Officials, to include designated proxies.</p>	<p>GSA will develop and market travel training to agencies for their voluntary use and implementation within their agency. In addition, GSA will investigate the authority to implement required training on travel at various levels within agencies. Finally, GSA will work with the Senior Travel Official Council to determine if agencies desire mandatory standardized training at various levels within their agencies.</p>
<b>11</b>	<b>Apply the standard CONUS rate for en route travel</b>	
	<p>Implement a per diem rate for travel days that is equal to the standard CONUS per diem rate. This rate is to be used for additional travel days exceeding one day for all Temporary Duty (TDY) and Permanent Change of Station (PCS) travel. When TDY travel using scheduled commercial or government transportation requires an overnight stopover point and lodging is incurred, the per diem rate for the stopover point applies. However, when privately-owned vehicle (POV), special conveyance, or government auto transportation is used, and the traveler selects the lodging location, the standard CONUS rate applies for the en route stopover point.</p>	<p>GSA agrees to conduct further research and analysis of this recommendation. In addition, GSA will work with the agencies to address the impact for administrative burden and issues associated with implementation.</p>
<b>12</b>	<b>Explore restaurant rebate programs</b>	
	<p>Establish a restaurant rebate program to leverage the approximately \$2 billion dollars in annual federal expenditures on meal per diem. Any restaurant rebate program should adopt best practices of corporate dining programs.</p>	<p>GSA agrees to work with DOD as they implement a pilot of a program similar to the recommendation. After a period of time sufficient for analysis, GSA will review the implementation issues and evaluate the cost benefits of the recommendation before determining if the recommendation should be implemented government-wide.</p>
<b>13</b>	<b>Balance car rental vehicle emissions with carbon offset programs</b>	
	<p>Recommend government vehicle rental program managers at GSA and Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) explore the practical application of a carbon offset program to mitigate the climate impact of CO2 emissions from fuel used during the government's rental period.</p>	<p>The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) coordinates Federal environmental efforts and works closely with agencies and other White House offices in the development of environmental policies and initiatives. GSA agrees to provide the CEQ with this recommendation and assist in a supporting role within the priorities of the CEQ.</p>